MEDIA RELEASE

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Early Education and Care Commission an opportunity to drive reform for Aboriginal children

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are central to delivering quality, culturally safe early childhood education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and the proposed Early Education and Care Commission presents a significant opportunity to drive the reforms needed to strengthen the system, SNAICC - National Voice for our Children has told Federal Parliament.

During a Senate Inquiry hearing into the state of Australia's early childhood education and care (ECEC) system in rural, regional and remote communities, the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children called for the proposed Commission to provide genuinely independent oversight and advice on system reform, working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

SNAICC Council member Richard Weston said the Commission could help steward the reforms needed to ensure the early education system works for all children and families, wherever they live.

“Despite the strengths of ACCO services and repeated recommendations from inquiries to improve the policy and funding environment they operate in, we have seen little change,” Mr Weston said.

“The proposed Early Education and Care Commission is a significant opportunity to change that. But it must be genuinely independent, informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise and work in partnership with our communities.

“We need a system that delivers on the Government’s commitment to universal early education and care, while being flexible enough to meet the needs of all Australian children and families.”

“Every child has a right to quality, regardless of where they live. Families need a service they can reasonably reach, that operates reliably and flexibly, and that they can afford and trust.

“For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, that service must also be culturally safe – something Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are best placed to deliver.

"The way government funding currently works overlooks the broader functions ACCOs undertake, including cultural programming, transport, family engagement, outreach, staff housing and connections with health and developmental supports. These are not extras. They are vital to helping children enrol, attend consistently and benefit from early learning.

"It's time for transparency, community-informed stewardship and funding that reflects the actual service model government needs ACCOs to deliver, with clear expectations for access, quality, cultural safety, participation and service continuity."

SNAICC is calling for a dedicated ACCO ECEC funding model that provides a stable supply-side funding floor, with additional funding reflecting remoteness, community need, vulnerability and service complexity.

Access information on a dedicated ACCO funding model here – https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/240507-ACCO-Funding-Report.pdf

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